

Kickapoo Valley Reserve UPDATE

Fall 2020

A quarterly publication highlighting education, property management & events on the KVR

COVID-19 UPDATE by Marcy West, Executive Director

On March 14th I sent a photo to a friend while checking the Hay Valley trail with the hashtag #SaferOutside. March feels like a lifetime ago given everything that has happened, but my tag did ring true throughout the summer.

Trails, campsites, and the Kickapoo river hosted more visitors than we could have ever imagined six months ago. The Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR) was not alone; local, state, and national parks all reported dramatic increases.

Our toughest impact was - and continues to be - in the Education Program. Spring field trips, summer camps and special events support the program year-round. The [new blog](#) and planning for the Forest School remind us that it will all return someday but, for now, it is too quiet in the Visitor Center. We want to share the story of the Reserve and everything the great outdoors offers and look forward to when it is safe to do so. For now, the building remains closed to the public.

As COVID-19 continues to spread, it is easy to predict an equally busy fall season for the KVR property. A few more weeks of trout fishing, hunting seasons starting up and the beauty of fall colors are annual attractions. Regular status updates will be provided via Facebook, Instagram, and the website; staff is on-site Monday thru Friday 8am-4:30pm and officers patrol the property regularly. Even though we cannot host indoors, we are happy to help plan a visit or answer your questions so you can enjoy the outdoors.

Kickapoo Valley Forest School Update Opening August 2021!

As many of you have heard, the Kickapoo Valley Forest School (KVFS) is set to open in August of 2021 for 4K and Kindergarten students. Each year a grade level will be added through 2nd grade. KVFS will enrich children's learning with opportunities to connect, explore, and engage through immersion in the natural world. This a public charter school within the La Farge School District hosted on-site at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. KVFS is open to students residing within and outside of the district. Enrollment will begin in February 2021.

Follow our social media posts for updates & information @kickapoovalleyschool on Facebook and Instagram, or visit our [website](#). Email questions to: kvfs@lafarge.k12.wi.us



A New Public Charter School
in the La Farge School District on site at the
Kickapoo Valley Reserve!

Kickapoo Valley Forest School Opening August 2021

Enrolling 4K and Kindergarten Students in February 2021

KVFS will enrich children's learning with opportunities to connect, explore, and engage through immersion in the natural world.



- Full Day Monday-Friday schedule for 4K and Kindergarten.
- Enrollment is open to families living within and outside the district.
- KVFS will grow to include 4K through 2nd grade.

For more information about upcoming information sessions and family events

Visit <https://bit.ly/3i3e0py>

Email kvfs@lafarge.k12.wi.us

Follow us on social media
[@kickapoovalleyschool](#)





What's Happening!

Jan. 1 - Dec. 31 - 2020 KVR Trail Challenge

Sept. 12 - Archery & Small Game Season Opens

Sept. 19 - *Driftless Dialogue*: Copper Bullet Demo -10:00 -NOON & Noon-2pm

Sept. 26 - *Driftless Dialogue*: Weister Creek Habitat Restoration - 10:00 -11AM

Oct. 3 - *Driftless Dialogue*: Flooding in the Kickapoo Valley - 10:00-11AM

Oct. 10 - *Driftless Dialogue*: Fall Invasives - 10:00 - 11AM

Oct. 10 & 11 - Youth Deer Hunt

Oct. 15 - KRMB Mtg. - 7PM

Oct. 17 - Pheasant Season Opens 9AM

Oct. 17 - *Driftless Dialogue*: Afield Portraits of a WI Naturalist - 10:00-11AM

Oct. 24 - KVR Friends Photo Contest entries due by midnight

Nov. 15 - KVR Equestrian & Mountain Bike Trails **CLOSE** for the season.

Nov. 19 - KRMB Mtg. - 7PM

Nov. 21-29 - Gun Deer Season

Dec.10-13 - Antlerless Deer Season

Dec. 17 - KRMB Mtg - 7PM

Apply for "Local Seat" vacancy on KRMB

Interested candidates residing locally should contact their nominating officials (usually the Chair of the Village-Ontario or LaFarge, Towns of Stark/Whitestown/Forest, School Board-Brookwood/La Farge/Hillsboro or Vernon County Board) to let them know they're interested in being nominated. All will require submission of a resume. It is up to the nominating body on whether the nominees need to appear before their board. Personal appearance for nomination is not a requirement of the State Statute. The nominating board should act in October to approve or deny the nomination during a formal, public meeting.

EVENTS UPDATE



Thank you to everyone who shared their feedback regarding hosting Dam Challenge 2020. The difficult decision has been made to cancel the race this year due to the challenges brought on by COVID-19 in our community, the strain it will place on our small staff at this time, and the concerns voiced by our vital volunteer base. We look forward to bringing this remarkable event back stronger than ever in 2021, and we thank you for your continued support!

Driftless Dialogue Series goes outdoors!

Upcoming Talks:

- **September 19** - Copper Bullet Demo
- **September 26** - Can managed grazing improve soil health & water quality in the Driftless Area?
- **October 3** - Riparian Forests, Stream restoration, and persistent Flooding in the Kickapoo Valley
- **October 10** - Invasive Plants in Fall: Identification & Management
- **October 17** - "Afield: Portraits of Wisconsin Naturalists, Empowering Leopold's Legacy"

-We are doing an all outdoor lecture series this fall! Each talk begins at 10:00am; Lectures are free and open to the public.

-**Pre-registration** for each talk is required. Call the KVR Visitor Center 608-625-2960 or email: kickpoo.reserve@krm.state.wi.us
Each talk is capped at 25 people.

-Talks will be recorded and uploaded to the KVR website and aired on the local community channel.

-Pre-packaged light snacks and beverages are provided free of charge (donations welcome).

-If we need to cancel or reschedule the talk, we will email each participant who registered and post on Facebook the status of each talk.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS: Please wear a face mask & distance at least 6 ft. from people not in your own household. Do not attend if you are experiencing any symptoms.

[Visit our website for more details and talk location](#)



The Ralph Nuzum Lecture Series is free thanks to a grant by the Ralph E Nuzum Kickapoo Reforestation Fund through the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and the Friends of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Zapus. by Ben Johnston

I first heard the word in an email a month or so ago (Summer 2020) in part of an exchange between a biologist and an ecologist.....

Ecologist: "You know anyone who is banding birds these days and needs traps/nets?"

Biologist: "No. We are only catching hairy things around here. We're in midst of a trapping season in our lower prairie and have been catching over 15 jumping mice (*Zapus*) daily. What a cool animal."

Ecologist: "If I ever had a kid, I would name her Zapus, 'til that day comes I'll use it on the cat..."

Biologist: "Yes, that would be a good name. It is the most beautiful and gentle of mice, doesn't smell bad and has dry poops. Giant feet though."

So anyways. Late August 2020, I was floating the Kickapoo River searching for the invasive plant Purple Loosestrife. I am approaching Bridge 18, with a high rock face to the right, and flood plain forest to the left, when I see something fall from an unspecified height, presumably from one of the Hemlocks towering above me. I see the object hit the ground once, bounce, drop a bit, hit a ledge, bounce, drop, and then fall to the water. Immediately, I decide it must be a tree frog. As I get closer, it appears the creature is struggling in the water (a frog that can't swim?). I see it attempt to climb up a small rock ledge just above the water line, to yet fall back in the water again. It is clearly a wet and furry whatever, struggling in the current. Lifeguard training kicks in....as well as a subtle reminder of my somewhat crippling phobia of touching animals. Quickly, I spin the boat around, and I position the canoe alongside the rock-water interface. I reach out with the paddle, dipping the blade into the water as parallel to the surface as possible. The wet furry thing, which now reveals an extremely long tail, makes his way up the paddle blade to safety.

I bring the paddle in closer, and position it over the canoe....just in case he falls, or attempts an escape. But he does neither. With a very calm demeanor, he appears stunned from the fall and the near drowning experience; perhaps he is puzzled about the hard surface upon which he now sits. A few steps here, then a few steps there, but no sense of urgency nor fear. I get the camera. The soggy mouse-shaped object poses for me....a display of the tail, flip of the hair, gives a right profile, a look over the left shoulder. The fur is streaked with dark and light brown, almost yellowish....*could this be a young 13 lined ground squirrel with all that striping; quick, start counting...no Ben, it's definitely a mouse creature. That is embarrassing you even thought it was squirrel type. Luckily, no one is here to read your mind. You should never ever admit to such nonsense.*

What to do when up creek with mouse on the paddle? Obviously, I cannot steer a canoe with a mouse seated on the paddle. Without warning, nor prompting, the mouse disappears. Once I confirm the he is safe in the boat and not back in the water, I regain control of the drifting canoe. I decide I best leave the mouse on the right side of the river, the side from where it came rather than the opposite side. I pull up to a small muddy beach between two cliffs, which provides steep options for scampering up the hillside. ***Continued next page...***



The new problem at hand is how do I get this small animal out of the canoe, without having to touch it (remember the phobia?). The paddle is a bit awkward to maneuver in the boat, especially since he is now under my seat. “Ah-ha! Gloves! Grab your gloves,” I exclaim....however they and the truck are waiting for me at Landing 20. I have a bit of river garbage I can use to scoop it up. Fortunately, the mouse must have sensed my quandary and politely climbed onto the life jacket sitting on the floor of the canoe. I pick the life jacket up and place it on the beach, and slowly then he steps off onto the shore. At this point, I decide a video is in order....I score a good two minutes of footage, only to realize I hadn’t pressed record. I press go and record the best 30 seconds of Oscar winning nature documentary ever recorded on the Kickapoo River since the beginning of the Age of COVID-19. Through the camera lens I notice moderately large feet, and relatively long hind legs, resembling the likes of a kangaroo. The mouse is still seeming slow and sluggish; obviously, I suppose....seeing he has had a full day...skydiving, cliff jumping, swimming, rock climbing, canoeing and now at the beach. After a while of watching the creature explore the muddy bank, I bid my new friend a good-bye with best wishes and hopes to meet it again one day.

And that is how I met my first *Zapus hudsonius*, the Meadow Jumping Mouse ([Zapus video](#)). I have heard of them (see above), but never had met one. When I got home, I looked in the book Mammals of Wisconsin (S. Tekiela) to figure out the species. Only two in the book had such long tails, the Woodland Jumping Mouse (*Napaeozapus insignis*) and the *Zapus*. The Woodland jumping mouse has a white tipped tail and lives in northern parts of the state. My pictures reveal no such tail tip so I came to the conclusion the mouse in question was *Zapus*, an abundant statewide species. Unfortunately, the life span is not more than a year, so our farewell was likely a final one. The overall habitat description suggests mainly in fields, so I am not sure the reason he was on the hemlock shaded cliff face, but that is not my place to judge. Furthermore, why the height from which it fell? I reckon I will never know.

According to our friends at UW Stevens Point, *Zapus* is an excellent swimmer. Sure didn’t look that way to me; maybe I ought have let nature do its thing and not have intervened. On the other hand, I was there and had opportunity, so why not take action? Yet, the UWSP website also refers to a scientific paper indicating *Zapus* becoming prey to brown trout and other predatory fish.... So perhaps it was a matter of life or death after all.

Birds and Wildflowers of the KVR

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve hosts 431 plants, of which 283 are considered wildflowers. Most of them are listed in linked brochure.

Wildflowers of KVR Checklist

Along with abundant wildflowers, the Kickapoo Valley Reserve offers valuable breeding habitat for more than 100 species, and over 200 species have been identified throughout the year. Many neotropical migratory species use the area as a stopover between the Missouri Ozarks and boreal forests of Canada.

Birds of KVR Checklist



Purple Fringed Orchid

New plants and birds may be discovered on KVR property that are not included on these lists. If you think you’ve found a new species, we’d love to hear about it.



Marsh St. John's-wort

Possible new plant not previously recorded on KVR property; discovered on September 1, 2020.



Yellow Warbler

Email: kickapoo.reserve@krm.state.wi.us with your findings. Pictures help to determine what you’ve found, so be sure to include those with your email, if possible.

Nature has been a welcome escape as we navigate the year 2020. The trails have

Trail Talk Destination – Escape

By KVR Staff Jackie Yocum

hosted many visitors. An increase in use brings its own set of challenges. Trail etiquette is something we can all educate each other on. Most trails on the KVR are shared use trails. Shared use means, different user groups share them. Horseback riders, bikers, hikers all share use of the same trail. Here are some simple reminders and more information can be found on our website.

1. **Greet** each other (from a distance). Say “Hi”, talk about the weather or anything. Horses especially like to know that you are a human and not a predator lurking in the woods.

2. **Yield**. All users should yield to horses. The humans in this scenario should talk to each other to facilitate a safe encounter.

3. **If you pack it in, please pack it out.**

Leave wherever you are cleaner than when you found it.

Looking for more details? <http://kvr.state.wi.us/>



Ground Wasps - - Beware!

Fall is when we get reports of “ground bees” along the trail, most of the time after a very painful experience. The little



angry residents aren’t actually bees at all - they are wasps and **Yellow Jacket Wasps** to be exact. They like to burrow on the soft edge of the trail and build their nest under the hard pack of the trail head. As users pass over their nest it is like knocking on the door of your grumpy neighbor, so watch out! While we protect our pollinators on the KVR, these painful pests are not on our favorites list. **Call the Visitor Center (608-625-2960)** if you encounter a nest and try to give the best information possible on the nest location and the crew will try to hunt them down. Ride and hike aware to avoid a painful encounter with these nasty little residents.

Hunting Reminders

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR) is OPEN to public hunting. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are allowed everywhere, except for a 300-foot buffer area around buildings. Hunters should note that horse and bike trails are open until November 15th, and hiking and camping are allowed year-round; know your target and beyond. Please note which hunting season is going on when planning a trip to the Reserve (2020 Hunting Calendar). We recommend wearing bright colors, such as blaze orange, when venturing out. As always, practice “pack it in - pack it out” and “leave no trace” principles. **Reminder: No tree stands overnight and no trail cameras ever.** A CWD test collection site will be located just north of the Rockton Bridge on Cut Off Road. A dumpster will be added soon for proper disposal of deer carcasses. More information can be found: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/cwd.html> Note: The KVR Visitor Center remains closed to the public. DNR Hunting regulation books and KVR maps are available for pick up outside the Visitor Center (by the bathrooms).



Be Sure of Your Target and Beyond!

Please, think about it...having an 8,600-acre tract of land open to public hunting is a wonderful opportunity for every hunter. Unfortunately, each year the staff of the Reserve hears about and witnesses damage caused by hunters. Shooting of signs and markers, leaving shell casings and other litter, and trespassing are also observed by responsible hunters and the non-hunting public. Sign replacement alone costs thousands of dollars each year. Hunters on public land need to follow the highest code of ethics, treat others and the property with the utmost respect so future hunting generations have the same opportunity you have. Thank you!

Exhibit Upgrade Update by Marcy West

The fundraising campaign was paused due to the pandemic. However, with help from the Friends of KVR and generous sponsors like Vernon Communications Cooperative, we're motivated to start up again. Over \$200,000 of the \$600,000 goal has been committed for the exhibit upgrade. [Contact us](#) for information on

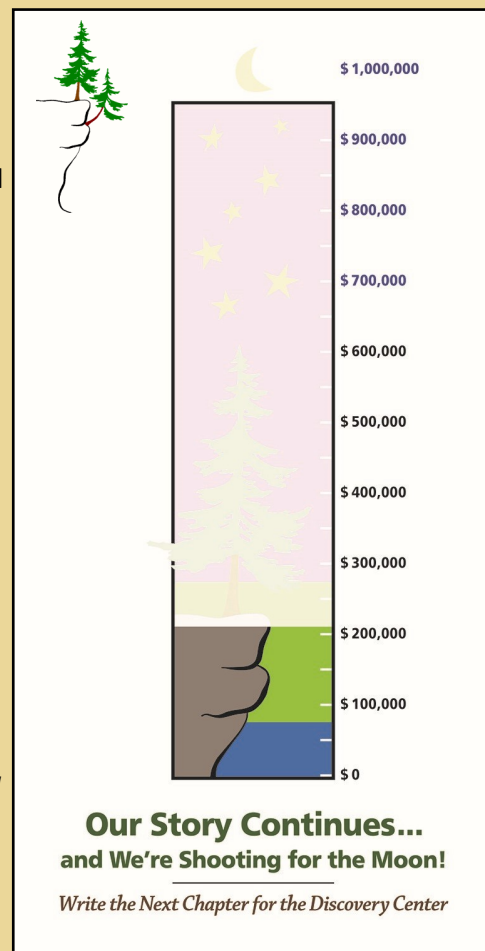
donating and how to help us "write the next chapter" for the KVR.

Find out ways that you can help: <http://kvr.state.wi.us/About-Us/Visitor-Center/Exhibit-Upgrade/>

"Imagine the current space redesigned to tell our stories of ecology, geology and human history with new technology to engage, inform and encourage outdoor exploration and appreciation." - Brad Steinmetz and Julie Hoel, Committee Co-Chairs



Pictured (from left): Rod Olson (VC Co-op CEO)
Julie Hoel and Brad Steinmetz (KVR Fundraising Committee Co-Chairs)



Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve Photo Contest

Now accepting entries!

The Friends of KVR annual digital photography contest is now accepting entries. All photos must be of the KVR or activities at the Reserve and may be in black & white or color. Individuals can submit up to 3 images in .jpg format, up to 8 megabytes.

Entry deadline is midnight, October 24, 2020.

\$50 prize to top 3 'Best in Show' entries.

Visit <https://kickapooofriends.org/>
for more details and online entry.

2019 Photo Contest Winners:



Pheasant Back Still Life by Karen Hermesen



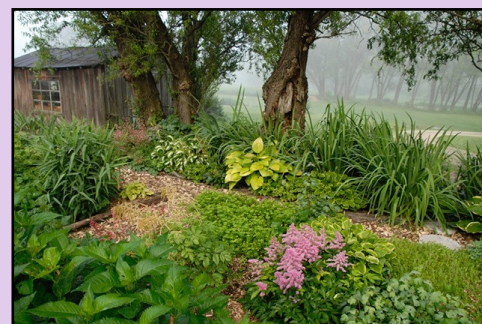
Blue Bells by Gary Galger

Garden Walk Tour Recap

On July 10 & 11, 2020 the Friends of KVR hosted their first annual Garden Walk Tour in the Ontario and La Farge area. The event helped raise over \$2,000 for the Friends organization. The Friends support the Kickapoo Valley Reserve financially in property and trail projects and maintenance, education and events programming and new initiatives.

Interested in supporting the mission of the Reserve and Friends organization? Consider becoming a Friends member.

Visit <https://kickapooofriends.org/> for more information.



One of the featured gardens.
Susan Reed & Peter Schmidt

**Stay tuned for more details on the
Friends of KVR annual
Holiday Happening Event.**